

W18

Wanted—
Facts
about
public
libraries

An action
plan
for a new
Federal-
State
Cooperative
System

U. S. National
Commission on
Libraries
and Information
Science

National
Center for
Education
Statistics

ED 1.102:

Overview

For the first time, statistics on all the country's public libraries will be collected by State library agencies based on standard terms and definitions and will be transmitted to the National Center for Education Statistics in machine-readable form. This will be the first national education survey to be reported, reviewed and tabulated completely by computer. A large data bank of information will be produced efficiently and promptly. The results will benefit all those who make decisions affecting public libraries and those who work to improve public library services.

Public library statistics and their use

Public libraries use statistics to assess their current status, to compare performance with other libraries, and to plan and budget for future services. These statistics are an essential part of a library's annual report to its "stockholders" —the taxpayers.

State libraries and federal agencies need statistics to plan and develop legislative and budget proposals and to evaluate grant and service programs.

Companies that sell products or services to libraries use statistics to develop business plans and marketing strategies.

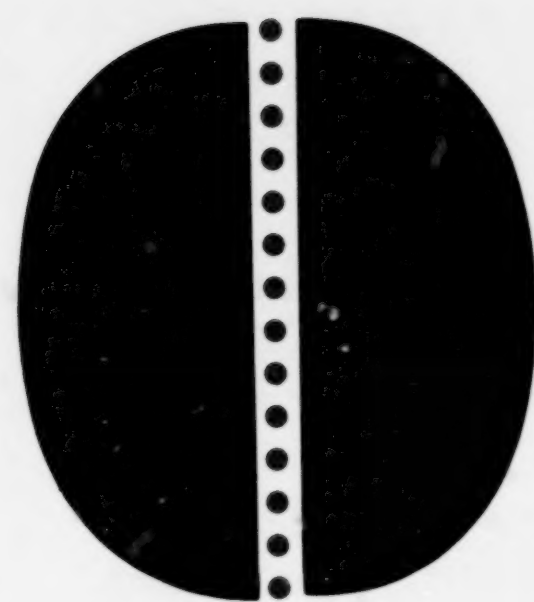
Journalists, researchers, and educators need statistics to study, understand, and report on libraries.

National, State, and regional library associations depend on statistics to prepare and present positions on current or proposed governmental programs.

Action by the U. S. Congress

In April 1988, Congress directed that there be an annual collection of public library statistics by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Participation by States is voluntary, but all States are encouraged to join.

For more than 100 years, the national collection of public library statistics has shifted through cycles of ups and downs. Now at last the Federal government is committed to develop and administer an annual collection, analysis, and dissemination of public library data under a Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS).



*operation
of FSCS*

COMPONENTS

The Bank of Information

Each State library agency will collect data for every public library administrative entity in the State.

The data will include the following topics:

- Number of books and other materials in the collection.
- Number of books and other materials loaned.
- Number of reference and information questions answered by staff.
- Number of librarians and other staff.
- Number of library branches and bookmobiles.
- Sources of income.
- Expenditures by category.
- Hours of service and more.

THE UNIVERSE FILE

Each State library agency will compile a list of every public library unit or entity in the State and categorize each entity by type, e.g., branch library, bookmobile, etc.

COMMUNICATING THE DATA

NCES will make the FSCS information available on magnetic tape, on floppy disk, and in printed form. Both State and national statistics will be reported. The public library data will also be available from State library agencies, Federal depository libraries, and by sale from the U. S. Government Printing Office.

PARTICIPANTS

Public Libraries: Annually each public library will send to the State library its statistics for each of 41 data elements. This information can be included in the public library's regular annual report to the State.

State Library Agencies: A State Data Coordinator has been designated by each of the State library agencies to collect and compile the statistics for the system. Each July the Coordinator will send information from all the State's public libraries to NCES in machine-readable form.

National Center for Education Statistics: NCES will compile data from all the States and publish the data both in print and computer-readable formats. NCES will offer assistance to the State Data Coordinators and sponsor training sessions and informational meetings.

National Commission on Libraries and Information Science: Based on its mandate to appraise current library adequacies, and to work with other Federal agencies to achieve related objectives, NCLIS is cooperating with NCES in developing FSCS.

*Benefits
from FSCS*

From the system the public libraries will gain access to reliable nationwide information about similar public libraries and groups of libraries. All libraries can use these facts to plan services, make management decisions, and justify budget requests. In addition, State library agencies will acquire useful information based on Statewide compilation and analysis of data. The system will also enable each State library agency to produce and receive from NCES customized reports and analyses.

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FSCS in Action

- Public library staff will maintain standard public library statistics and submit them annually to the State library agency.
- Public library directors will use public library statistics and analyses to improve and develop public library services.
- State library agencies will review public library statistics for accuracy and report them promptly each July to NCES.
- National Center for Education Statistics will review and analyze all data received and then publish and make otherwise available State and national public library statistics each year without delay.
- National Commission on Libraries and Information Science will continue coordination and support of FSCS and, for example, use its products in the conduct of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services.
- State and national government officials will use State and national public library statistics to evaluate legislation and appropriations relating to public libraries and their services.

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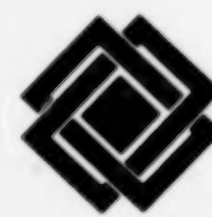
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